1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alor OF5

Carvings of village gods are kept hidden, and the life-size 461
singularly crude, and no value is attached to them once they have been 317
used for sacrificial purposes. It is not unusual to see these "sacred" carv- 778
ings lying on the ground rotting away. (It was always considered a
windfall to be able to sell me one. Also, I found it impossible to appeal
to pride in order to procure good specimens for the museum collection I
was making, and only by repeatedly refusing to pay for the poor ones
did I get better examples of handicrafts.)

Although they are capable of building large and imposing houses, 661
about a third of the houses were of the shed or field-hut type, which 992
can be thrown together in a few days. Even an imposing new lineage
house will have the edges of its thatch torn to shreds within a year by
its owners, who pull out a handful whenever they want a torch at
night. As I have already indicated, tattooing and teeth blackening are
so unskillfully done that they fail frequently to be permanent. Basketry 284
is of the simplest sort, with a minimum of overlay decorations. The
Atimelangers have never acquired the arts of weaving known on the
coast, of pottery produced in villages not two hours away, or of *cire*
perdue casting known in the eastern part of the island. This is true de-
spite the fact that they know the processes fairly well, and there are no
taboos or restrictions that I could discover against the practice of such
crafts.

Their mythology is confused and unstructuralized. Their knowledge 773
of genealogies is so deficient that many individuals do not know their 601
more remote Male House kin. Ceremonial procedure is almost always a 796
source of fumbling and of heated argument as to proper procedure. In
respect to some of these items, it is possible that they represent newly
or partially introduced features which were not clearly understood in
the first place, or else features that were survivalistic. Regardless of the
possible historical situation, the fact remains that little is done by way
of elaboration and integration, and no effort is made to master the re-
sources of the environment.

From the point of view of depth psychology all this might well point 155
to a weakness in ego development. This would be in agreement with
my suggestions in the preceding chapters, that it is precisely in the
realm of ego development that the Atimelang child suffers the greatest
handicaps and receives the least encouragement. The rewards are few
and meager in childhood as well as in adult life. Men want to be rich;
they may have the drive, but more than drive is necessary for success-
ful accomplishment. Consistent training and the assurance of reward
(or penalty) are essential to learning. These two factors are largely
absent. It is not astonishing, therefore, that so many men accept the

1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1946
GFS Alor GFS

[537] role of mediator, which is a partial abandonment of goal and a partial continuation of childhood patterns.

FINANCE AND AESTHETICS

[537] 533 534 It is interesting that there are only two areas in which men seem to achieve any degree of esthetic self-expression. Both are indirectly associated with finance. One is gong playing, the other is versification. It will be recalled that gongs are one of the currencies. Whole gongs (*fokang*) are not very fluid as currency since they are prized for ceremonial purposes. Broken gongs (*ut*) are used constantly as small change. Their values range from about fifty cents to several rupiahs. Gong playing begins in middle childhood and may continue throughout life. More often the long, steady gong beating of death memorials (*sinewat*), of lineage house building, and so forth is turned over to boys and young men, but older men frequently experiment with new rhythms or set the pattern for an orchestra composed of sisken and gongs of different sizes.

538 The connection of versification with finance comes out more plainly than that of gong playing and finance. It is the only form of poetic expression fostered by the people. It is, in fact, practically the only attempt at literary expression of any sort. The preoccupation with finance and even its esthetic transpositions are evident from some of the verses quoted below. The dances last from eight or nine o'clock in the [539] evening until dawn the next day. They usually precede a ceremonial event, with its inevitable financial concomitants. The participants, facing inward, their arms about each other, form a circle on the dance place. They progress sideways.

Any man may begin a verse. The form in which he expresses himself has certain stereotyped limits and a set range of elaborate metaphors, but it is not so fixed that creative leeway is forbidden. As the soloist finishes a verse, he indicates a change in tempo. Thereupon all [539] the dancers join in one of the dozen or more set choruses characterized by syllables which are predominantly meaningless and slightly more rapid in beat. The ability to improvise is highly esteemed. Ambitious young men of seventeen or eighteen years first try to versify in this fashion. An inadequate performance is not publicly ridiculed, but there is a certain amount of snickering behind the performer's back. Those with real ability persist in their efforts and may be admired performers by the time they are in their late thirties or early forties. Abilities naturally vary. By rough estimate perhaps 10 per cent of the mature men are recognized as good singers. A few verses taken at random from